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SUBJECT: ITALY AGREES IN PRINCIPLE ON OSCE MONITORING MISSION IN IRAQ; HAS SUGGESTIONS FOR MANDATE

REF: A) STATE 252711 B) ROME 4000

Guidance Request - see para 3.

1. (U) MFA OSCE Office Director Fabio Cristiani told poloff that an OSCE election observer mission for Iraq as proposed reftel was in line with Italy's view that the organization's expertise should be exploited for "out of theater" missions. He agreed that ODIHR could provide invaluable assistance to the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq (IECI) in the run-up to the elections, and help draft "lessons learned" for future elections.

2. (U) Cristiani also noted that given the security conditions, such a mission would not follow standard ODIHR procedures, i.e. a small long-term advisory team followed by a larger short-term observer contingent throughout the country, culminating in a statement on whether or not the elections were "free and fair" and/or represented the will of the voters. He suggested therefore that the effort not be dubbed a "monitoring mission" but rather a "technical" or "advisory" mission to the IECI. Such distinctions would be necessary to dampen any expectation that OSCE would be able to comment on the election results countrywide, and to protect the integrity of future ODIHR efforts. Cristiani said that the mandate must therefore be drafted carefully and be clear in its limitations. Italy was ready to assist this effort.

3. (SBU) Cristiani also said Italy would be interested in seconding personnel to an OSCE Iraq election team, but still faces internal bureaucratic hurdles described ref b, which preclude the MFA from distributing funds directly to observers. Cristiani asked if the USG would intervene on Italy's behalf with ODIHR officials to encourage them to take on the simple task of a one-time per diem distribution to its observers. Post requests Department's instructions on a response to Cristiani.

MINIMIZE CONSIDERED

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